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1875.

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# The Bloomfield Record.

S. M. HULLIN, Publisher.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER, BUT TRUTH IS THE FOUNDATION OF KNOWLEDGE.

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## HESTER LENOX'S VOW.

"God sometimes lifts a soul up to the  
full measure of its endeavors. The soul  
strong in inspiration cries out, 'Here am  
I—send me!' and the Divine Master  
takes it at its word and says, 'follow me,'  
and by the way that keeps the cross over  
in sight leads it on. These are the guides  
of others into light; of more prescient  
than they and knowing more fully  
their own burdens and those imposed up-  
on them by weaker human nature."

Hester Lenox read the words  
slowly in her little chamber of the New  
England plain red farm house, and as  
she mused the fire burned within, till  
her enthusiastic young nature sprang up  
responsive and she made her vow: "Any  
sacrifice—any toil—only let me become  
one of the world's earnest workers."

Except when she remembered Clatterton  
we should have called this a place for  
poetic sensibility to abide. The early af-  
ternoon sun was just finding its way into  
the western window, glinting over the  
bare painted floor with its one rag mat  
before the bed, its large, painted chest  
of drawers opposite, the yellow washstand  
in the corner with the tin basin turned  
over upon it and the square glass above,  
the two Windsor chairs set properly  
against the wall, and a hanging shelf  
holding a Bible, hymn book and "Ques-  
tions on the Shorter Catechism." The  
book took it all in as she smoothed the  
patchwork coverlet and tossed the one  
pillow. "I don't believe there are many  
great things written or lived in such a  
place as this," she thought.

"Hester, Hester, child," called her  
aunt's voice from below, "go down and  
stir the soap now and then pick over the  
apples; they'll all spoil if you don't. I'm  
going to color" rags. Busy now."

"Yes, aunt," replied Hester, as she  
gave a last pat to the pillow, tucked the  
book (where she had found her words of  
inspiration) out of sight among the  
snowy clothes in her drawer, from whence  
came the scent of sweet-smelling herbs,  
marjoram and the like, gave a girlish  
glance in the glass and a swift touch to  
her brown locks—then saying aloud, "I'd  
like to know when and where my  
'work' is to begin," she went down stairs  
and to the cellar.

The soap had been busy upon all  
the morning steamed up in hot, nauseous  
vapors as Hester plunged her ladle to the  
bottom of the barrels, and the muffled  
clunks swam and dived around like a  
party of frogs at their evening play. It  
was not nearly as romantic as hanging  
on Versuvius, but the soap must be  
"made" and the girl's "bringing up" had  
no such work as "shrink" in it, so she  
drew her nose close to her lip and finish-  
ed the disagreeable task; then, to the  
shelves, where catenating a lid of sum-  
mer's coming, round, ruddy Baldwin's,  
toothsome Greenings and juicy Pound  
Sweets, that had lain proper and decor-  
ous all winter, were beginning to mellow  
and become so liberal and outflowing in  
their ideas that they must be separated  
from their close and more orthodox  
brethren. It was not hard work. The  
sun found but scant entrance through  
the narrow window, and even then be-  
came so entangled in the winter's cob-  
webs that it was nearly lost. Everything  
had the spring restlessness. Spiders just  
awake were beginning their spring exam-  
ination and dusting out their curtains  
ready for unwary flies. Tall branching  
shoots from the potatoes, like cathedral  
spires, that sometimes the nearer they  
approach heaven the more vividly speak  
the corruption whence they spring and  
the need of its benison; the breath from  
the crushed apples that all the winter  
had been containing their wrath in bar-  
rels and were now nearly ready to eat out  
the heart of sweetness itself; the briny  
smell from pork and beef barrels, sug-  
gestive of the salt sea; the swing shelf,  
with its few remaining squashes spotted  
and speckled as with a spring "breaking  
out"—homely comfort, all. The few flies  
which had survived their winter siesta  
hummed in the air, and the young girl's  
heart hummed respectively its own tune.

She thought of the new print dress, and  
wondered whether it would be more be-  
coming with a white ruff in the neck or  
a simple linen collar and blue band, and  
she blushed a little as she found she was  
beginning to look through the black eyes  
of a certain Hugh Wilson, as though her  
blue ones could decide the effect. Though  
why she blushed we cannot say; she had  
certainly never done so when the black  
eyes were directly before her. Then she  
only tossed her head in a very trying, in-  
dependent manner to the owner of same.

But the sun sank lower there; was a  
slight noise like a fall up stairs;—she re-  
membered it afterward, and finally, just  
as her task was accomplished, her uncle's  
voice at the door above—"Hester, Hes-  
ter, Hester, are you there?"

"Yes, uncle," she cried, frightened by  
the strange, quavering tone; then she  
sprang up the stairs and saw it all. Her  
aunt, lying prone and helpless on the  
floor at the foot of the chamber stairs,  
without speech or sense. They lifted  
her on the lounge; then the husband  
went for help and Hester did the swift-  
needed things that only a woman's hand

By-and-by, after that first dazed, terri-  
ble hour it became plainer. The aunt  
had moaned a little and spoken. She  
was lying now in her own bed, the  
strong woman who had scarcely ever  
known a day of sickness in her life, and  
the doctor said she must be kept per-  
fectly quiet and have constant care; so a  
neighbor sat by the bed and Hester clear-  
ed away the almost untasted supper, and  
in a dim way remembered the quiet of  
the noon and the new dress and the little  
company. She was to have worn it, too,  
this evening, and Hugh—

Before that, when they had asked Hes-  
ter for linen bandages, she had gone up  
stairs and opened her own sweet-smelling  
bureau drawers, and lifting the clothes  
bag, had mechanically taken up the  
book whose high-sounding phrases had  
so stirred her pulses in the noontime,  
and then gone up to the attic with the  
book in her hand, and still half dream-  
ing, dropped it in the old chest, as she  
found the desired roll and turned down  
stairs. She thought so more of the  
book.

Nord did the time for thought of such  
come very soon again to the young girl.  
Day by day they drifted into the ways  
that are so hard for us to contemplate,  
but so surely come when there is a  
stricken one in the household. The  
strong, practical man proved the weaker  
here, and each time he came out from  
his wife's room he would look eagerly  
into Hester's face and ask, "Isn't this a  
little better to-day?" And Hester,  
looking at the poor, anxious face, could  
not tell him all. For she had heard  
the women whisper that it would have  
been better if the poor aunt had never  
come back to consciousness, and she  
knew the doctor was very grave; so far  
the poor sufferer herself seem to have no  
memory, only asking for drink, and  
sometimes counting the flies on the  
whitewashed wall for the leaf shadows.

For the leaves came out and spring grew  
into summer, and one night Hester went  
to walk. It had been a hot July day, and  
ironing had not left her much strength.  
So she sauntered slowly down the lane  
and by chance Hugh Wilson was just  
home from his day's haying, and they  
turned into the orchard. We cannot  
tell you how he said it, but it was the old,  
old story and the lover's promises, and a  
grace that was fairer than the moonlight  
over all things.

"I can have the Kelly farm next spring,  
Hugh said, as they walked home; "and  
then, dear, what a cosy home shall be  
ours, and somebody to care for you al-  
ways and all the time."

And Hester answered, "Yes, as soon  
as aunt is well I will be ready," while  
they drifted into her memory the stran-  
gest, sweetest words lips ever speak or  
heart treasure up—"somebody to care for  
you evermore." They were there  
still when the maiden knelt at her cham-  
ber window and spoke the words of pray-  
er that almost ended "for Hugh's sake,"  
so grand and pure did the new love make  
all things while the blue above shined  
with gems and the hushed air around  
seemed to whisper of peace and rest.

The summer flowers waned and autumn  
leaves drifted slowly down, and finally  
the autumn came out to her chair  
again. Her chair, but nevermore her  
place, for slowly the dread certainty  
forced itself upon all, and last on the hus-  
band and the fall had weakened both  
body and mind, and their household  
also must learn the grace that comes from  
caring for the sick one in its midst. How  
Hester's heart pined then both. The  
white-haired man would sit for hours fol-  
lowing each motion of his stricken  
wife, smiling if she in her almost im-  
becile way smiled, lifting the kitten to her  
lap when her shaking finger tried to  
catch the soft fur as it passed, or putting  
the knitting in the old place, watch the  
futile efforts to hold it. Hester watched  
the "two children" with a sad pity that  
broke her heart almost. In the winter  
evenings, when Hugh came she was con-  
scious that thoughts of pity were those  
of pain also; why, she dared not say.  
Hugh left off speaking of the Kelly place  
and began to talk of "going West," and  
just as the snows began to melt he came  
over to say it was all settled and he should  
go the next week.

"I suppose if I bided a little you could  
not go, Hester?"

"I shall never leave my uncle and aunt  
while they live and need me," was the  
answer, and the blue eyes grew bright  
with strong emotion.

"But it may be so long to wait," urged  
Hugh.

"I do not ask you to wait, Hugh. You  
are free now to find some other to make  
you happy. My duty is here."

"I don't believe you ever cared for  
me as much as I for you," he replied,  
hotly.

"Yes, Hugh—only I am a woman, and  
you are a man. There's a difference in  
these things."

So the truth of the summer was bro-  
ken, and after one sharp agony the strong  
nature took up its home life with the un-  
ceasing round of trifling cares, and the  
ever increasing care of her "two children,"  
for such they were at last until in the  
third winter, the old man slipped away  
under the snows and the two women were

Hester "let" the farm, took a little  
chore boy from the poor-house and went  
on in her round. Hugh had come back  
from the west the year before with more  
than he carried away, having picked up  
the ague in some swamp, and a wife in  
the hotel girl who nursed him through  
the chill fever. "Alice was a pleasant  
girl," Hester said, "she was glad Hugh  
had done so well; and the gossip con-  
fided 'she never cared much for him,  
after all'—not knowing of that evening's  
plighting in the orchard, and that such  
an hour a true woman never for-  
gets."

As the years slipped by Hester grew  
into the notable housekeeper of the  
neighborhood. No yeast so light or pil-  
lows so downy, or house so spotless as  
hers, and the old lady in her chair by the  
stone looked always so fresh and tender,  
ly cared for, her cap and ruffs white as  
snow, and the knitting work which had  
never grown since that first day, lying in  
her lap, for she seemed uneasy without it,  
until at last when the ten full years were  
ended there came a change. She had  
been failing all winter, requiring much  
care and constant watching, and unwill-  
ing to accept it from any hand but the  
one that had so long given it; so it was  
a hard winter for Hester, but the end  
came.

The sun had just risen when a feeble  
voice called "Hester, Hester!" It was so  
long since she had spoken that name,  
then as the woman who had been a girl  
when she heard it last for those lips  
opened the bed with falling tears, the  
dead eyes looked up and brightened, and  
the so long palsied voice said, "You've  
been a good girl, Hester," then trembled  
away into silence and was lost in the  
soundings of the waves of the eternal sea.

Those were just the days of the murder  
of Ellsworth, and the white heat of in-  
dignation, to call for volunteers—Hugh  
Wilson was one of the first to enlist—the  
heart breaking Bull Run. But through  
the summer Hester lived as in a dream,  
taking little note of things. The reaction  
from the long watching was intense and  
the good woman in who had helped her  
for the last ten years had all the cure now.

In the autumn came a new awakening  
in the call for nurses. "I think I can do,"  
Hester said a little bitterly; "I am thirty  
and certainly need not fear for my beau-  
ty." A few weeks later she took her place in  
a hospital near Washington, and for many  
months the calm, pale woman who seemed  
to have buried self, moved deftly among  
the weary, wounded, dying  
ones.

"A hard lot brought in to-night," the  
surgeon said to her one hot, sultry  
night. "No hope for any; come and help  
me."

She went, and found Hugh. His arms  
were shattered; he was bleeding to  
death.

"God be thanked;—you can tell Alice  
and the little ones that I thought of them,  
loved them to the last; and I've nothing to  
leave them. O, it's hard!"

"Don't fear, Hugh, I have enough for  
all, and will take care of them."

"God bless you, Hester! You were al-  
ways a good friend to me. Tell Alice that  
I loved her—loved—." And with the  
going down of the harvest moon Hugh's  
life went out.

A little longer Hester remained and  
then took up her way North, the farm  
was still left, but the old red farm house  
was empty. To it she brought Alice and  
the little ones and began her "winter of  
content." If little Hugh, who was his  
father's image, was favored above his sis-  
ters, who can blame her? Had not she  
carried that image very long in her deep-  
est heart?

One bright spring day Hester found  
her way to the attic and the old chest,  
rummaging there brought out the long-for-  
gotten book. Mechanically she opened it  
and her eyes fell upon the words,  
"God sometimes lifts a soul to the full  
measure of its endeavors," and then came  
back the memory of that day when she  
had gone down stairs strong to find her  
"work," and God had taken her at her  
word and by "any sacrifice—any toil,"  
had counted her worthy to be one of the  
"world's earnest workers." Something  
of this forced itself into the woman's  
soul as she reviewed the way she had  
come, but the full revelation of its no-  
bility must wait for the unfolding by the  
angels. There are souls that are lying  
away very sweet surprises for themselves.

"Aunt Hester, Auntie," piped a shrill  
voice, and small feet pattered up the  
stairway—"Mamma wants to know if  
you're going to make soap to-day?" and  
with a smile that was half a sigh, Hes-  
ter put away the book and was led by tiny  
hands down the stairs.

We cannot too soon convince ourselves  
how easily we may be dispensed with in  
the world. What important personages  
we imagine ourselves to be! We think  
that we alone are the life of the circle in  
which we move; in our absence we fancy  
that life, existence and breath will come  
to a general pause; and alas! the gap which  
we leave is scarcely perceptible so quick-  
ly it is filled again; nay, it is often but  
the place, if not for something better,  
at least for something more agreeable.

## WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT.

If you've any task to do,  
Let me whisper, friend, to you,  
Do it.

If you've anything to say,  
True and needed, yes or nay,  
Give it.

If you've anything to love,  
As a blessing from above,  
Love it.

If you've anything to give,  
That another's joy may live,  
Give it.

If you know what touch to light,  
Guiding others through the night,  
Light it.

If you've any debt to pay,  
Rest you neither night or day,  
Pay it.

If you've any joy to hold,  
Next your heart lest it grow cold,  
Hold it.

If you've any grief to meet  
At the loving father's feet,  
Meet it.

If you're given light to see,  
What a child of God should be,  
See it.

Whether life be bright or drear,  
There's a message sweet or clear  
Whispered down to every ear:  
Hear it.

## Home Courtesies.

A writer in Hargr's Bazar makes some  
excellent remarks concerning courtesy at  
home. Please listen, good people of the  
home circle: The "placing of the arm-  
chair in a warm place for mamma, run-  
ning for a footstool for auntie, hunting  
up papa's spectacles, and scores of little  
loving deeds, show unsuppressed and  
loving hearts. But if mamma never re-  
turns a smiling "Thank you dear," if pa-  
pa's "Just what I was wanting, Susie,"  
does not indicate that the little attention  
is appreciated, the children soon drop  
the habit. Little people are imitative  
creatures, and quickly catch the spirit  
surrounding them. So if when the moth-  
er's spool of cotton rolls from her lap,  
the father stoops to pick it up, bright  
eyes witness the act, and quick mind  
make a note of it. By example, a thou-  
sand times more quickly than by precept,  
children can be taught to speak kindly  
to each other, to acknowledge favors, to  
be gentle and unselfish, to be thoughtful  
and considerate of the comfort of the  
family. The boys, with inward pride of  
their father's courteous demeanor, will  
be chivalrous and helpful to their young  
sisters; the girls, imitating the mothers,  
will be gentle and patient, even when big  
brothers are noisy and headless. In the  
home where true courtesy prevails, it  
seems to meet you on the threshold.  
You feel the kindly welcome on enter-  
ing. No rude eyes scan your dress. No  
angry voices are heard up stairs. No  
sullen children are sent from the room.  
A delightful atmosphere pervades the  
house—unmistakable, yet indescribable.

## A Beautiful Sentiment.

Shortly before his departure for India,  
the lamented Heber preached a sermon  
which contains this beautiful sentiment:  
"Life bears us on like the stream of a  
mighty river. Our boat glides down the  
narrow channel—through the playful  
murmuring of the little brook, and the  
winning of its grassy borders. The trees  
shed their blossoms over our young head,  
the flowers on the brink seem to offer  
themselves to our young hands; we are  
happy in hope, and grasp eagerly at the  
beauties around us—but the stream hur-  
ries on and still our hands are empty.  
Our course in youth and manhood is a  
long and wilder flood, amid objects more  
striking and magnificent. We are im-  
mated at the moving pictures of enjoy-  
ment and industry passing us; we are ex-  
cited at hope—short-lived at disappoint-  
ment. The stream bears us on, and our  
joys and griefs are alike left behind us.  
We may be shipwrecked, we cannot be  
delayed; whether rough or smooth, the  
river hastens to its home, till the roar of  
the ocean is in our ears, and the tossing of  
the waves is beneath our feet—the land  
lessons from our eyes; the floods are lifted  
around us, and we take our leave of earth  
and its inhabitants, until of our further  
voyage there is no witness, save the In-  
finite and Eternal."

## At the "Springs."

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